THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : The clarifications are over. You please sit down, Mr. Rao .... (*Interruptions*) .... Mr. Jadhav, you please sit down. Let the Minister reply .... (*Interruptions*) ....

SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV : He is ready to yield .... (*Interruptions*) ....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : No. If I allow you, I will have to allow everybody. So, kindly co-operate with the Chair. Please sit down .... (*Interruptions*) .... Mr. Rao, please sit down. I am not allowing anything. Kindly sit down .... (*Interruptions*) .... We cannot keep on going from clarifications to clarifications. Please sit down. Let him answer. We have got other items of busines also .... (*Interruptions*) ....

SHRI MOTURU HANUMANTHA RAO : He has assured as something and it is contrary to what has been said earlier .... (*Interruptions*) ....

SHRI ARJUN SINGH : I will reply to you. Madam, I would like to state very categorically that in the 1968 Language Policy, the Language Policy enunciated then, there is no change. The asurance given by the late Prime Minister, Jawaharlalji, will be ensured and respected and there is no question of any deviation from that. So far as the promotion of languages is concerned, well, there are Universities for other languages and if Hindi also wants to be there, what is the harm ? .... (*Interruptions*) ....

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI : What I was saying was .... (*Interruptions*) ....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : No. I am not allowing anything .... (*Interruptions*) .... Now, the Minister, Mr. Rajesh Pilot, to make a statement .... (*Interruptions*) .... Nothing will go on record except what the Minister says. Yes, Mr. Pilot .... (*Interruptions*) ....

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Provision of Group Dialling Facility in Rural Areas and Rationalisation of Tariff for Local and Trunk Calls.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT) : Madam Vice-Chairman,

I wish to keep the House informed of two important measures that the Government is taking relating to provision of Group Dialling facility in rural areas and consequential rationalisation of tariff for local calls and Trunk calls (both manual and subscriber dialled).

Members are aware that Government have taken steps to accelerate provision of of telecommunications facility in the rural areas. The number of exchanges in rural areas today stands at more than 15,000 against about 8000 in the year 1982. The programme of the Government to connect all the Gram Panchayats numbering approximately 2,20, 000 by 31st March, 1995 is also likely to create more demand for telecommunications facility in the rural areas.

These developments have resulted in a consequential demand from the rural community for providing them group-dialling facility. The rural subscribers have also started demanding STD service. Provision of STD in all rural exchanges will require implementation over a period of time. As a first step, the Government have decided to introduce group-dialling facility in the rural areas. This also calls for rationalisation of charging methods for calls within the group dialling area as also the long distance area.

One of the technical requirements for linking all the exchanges in the country to the National STD is the concept of short distance charging areas (SDCA) which gives a unique identity for numbering and charging with reference to other short distance charging areas. Thus formation of SDCA will enable rapid expansion of STD to rural areas.

The present charging plan for determining call charges (both for manual and subscriber dialled) requires the measurement of actual distance from each exchange to a large number of telephone exchanges located in a large area. This not only places technical constraints in terms of extending STD to rural subscribers but also becomes difficult to administer in view of the enormous increase in the telecom network and a large number of telephone exchange which are getting commissioned every year.

It is, therefore, proposed that for measurement of distances the country is divided into 321 Long Distance Charging Areas (LDCA) which are co-terminous with the Secondary Switching Areas that form the Administrative Unit :

(i) The L.D.C.As cover generally one or two Revenue Districts.

(ii) Each LDCA is again divided into a number of short Distance Charging Areas (SDCA) generally covering one or more Tehsils as the case may be. The area of each Short Distance Charging Area is arranged to be between 500 to 2000 Sq. Kms. With some exceptions especially in unpopulated areas of the North East, there will be a total of 2570 SDCAs.

Revised Charging Plan

At present, the rural subscribers have to mainly depend upon the manual trunk service for talking to neighbouring exchanges. They have also to pay trunk call charges for talking to even the neighbouring exchange which increase with distance and are costlier. With the provision of group-dialling facility, it shall now become possible for them to directly dial subscribers in the same SDCA without going through the operator. The charges for direct dialling facility within the SDCA shall also be concessional at the rate of one call unit for every 3 minutes (Rs. 1) irrespective of the distance whether it is in 0 to 20 KMs slab or more.

Although this proposal will entail substantial loss to the Department, it is expected that with increase in telecommuunication network, the same would be compensated in future. The manual trunk call charges however are proposed to be revised from Rs. 2 to 5 for one call unit of 3 minutes duration for the distance slab of 0—20 Kms which will apply for calls uniformally within or outside SDCA.

In respect of calls made beyond the short distance charging area, a particular exchange around the centre of the area, would be identified as the Short Distance Charging Centre (SDCC) for each SDCA and similarly a Long Distance Charging Centre (LDCC for each LDCA. The charges for calls made beyond the SDCA would be governed as per the distance measured :

(a) between SDCC (Short Distance Charging Centre) to SDCC in respect of SDCAs located in the same or adjacent LDCA.

(b) between LDCC (Long Distance Charging Centre) to LDCC in all other cases.

The calls within the same SDCA will be available on a level other than level '0' (which is the code for National Subscriber Dialling) so that the STD barred subscribers will be able to make these direct dialled calls.

Calls to Peripheral Towns

Along with revised charging plan it is also proposed to introduce a scheme by which subscribers located in two telephone systems which are adjacent to each other and have a common border are able to directly dial their calls at low tariff. This will be especially beneficial to small satellite towns around the periphery of big towns and it is expected that the low tariff will enable the dispersal of population big towns to the adjoining small places. These calls irrespective of distance will also be metered at one call unit for every three minutes. The STD barred subscribers will also be able to use this service. This is mainly for the towns around cities like

[Shri Rajesh Pilot]

Delhi, For example, Gurgaon has STD. With this system, it will come under group dialling. It will become a normally-charged call. Similarly, all over the country. Small towns will be connected with the big towns under this group dialling.

Multi-metering of local calls

The need for introduction of pulsed metering even for local calls especially in large telephone systems has been engaging the attention of the Government for some time. Such a system exists in at least 30 countries in the world. Members may recall the discussions that have taken place in both the Houses during the question hour on this proposal. A large number of representations have also been received from Members, Public, Subscriber's Associations and Chamber of Commerce etc. The Consultative Committee of Parliament for Ministry of Communications also considered the proposal and recommended pulse-metering of one call unit for 5 minutes' duration. Accordingly, it has been decided that the local calls in all systems of more than 30,000 lines capacity will be metered @ one call unit for 5 minutes duration. Presently, it is technically feasible to introduce this arrangement only in electronic exchanges.

The need for introducing time limit for local calls has been felt to decongest the network so that more calls can get completed. Though most of the subscribers are known to be restricting their calls to less that 3 minutes or so there are commercial subscribers who have FAX machines and computers that use the local lines for very long duration to transfer data. The Government feels justified to charge such subscribers more than the normal subscribers who do not use the line for long durations. It is expected that in general, subscribers will limit their calls to 5 minutes duration that is being prescribed and this will result in better call completion and improving the efficiency of the network.

All the above schemes require considerable technical preparations to be made before implementation. It is proposed that the same will be implemented by each Telecom. Circle as and when they complete the technical arrangement, and in any case, not later than 31-8-92.

Madam, I will just explain this in brief because this is a very technical subject. I will give the idea behind this. Initially, we took steps to connect the State Capitals by STD, and the State Capitals with the rest of the country. Then, we came to the district level. Luckily, today, we have all the districts connected by STD, except a few districts which have been declared by the State Governments recently. I think, the number of districts may be 6—8, which are left over. The rest of the districts have been connected.

Under this group dialling, as will get back to the block and taluk headquarters. Our idea is to reach every village. Our aim is to have an exchange and STD facility in each village, so that from every village one can contact anywhere in the country and anywhere in the world as well. This scheme will help us. Now, from tahsil 'A' to tahsil 'B' you book a call. They charge and the time is also wasted. With this group dialling, with this LDCA and SDCA covered, they will have a direct dialling from tahsil to tahsil. The moment a tahsil has STD facility, village will be connected with tahsil. Therefore, village will be connected to all the places in the country and in the world, i.e. 226 countries where we have this ISD facility.

This is a scheme, Madam, to have the communication network thrown open to the rural areas. Now, people want to move towards big towns because the facilities are available there. Suppose, a place 30 kms. away from Delhi has the same facility which is available, say, at Connaught Place, the people will not move towards big towns. They will stay in the village where the facility is there. Today, communication is no more a question of status. It is one of necessity. That is why we have decided. I have quoted the example of Gurgaon. They use the STD facility to get Delhi .Now, it will be on a normal level.

It will be a local call. In regard to calls, for such places, we have kept three minutes. The traffic has to be controlled. For example, from NOIDA, in the morning, people will call a number and keep it on the line for half-an-hour. We have to stop such things. It is more a public utility. Therefore, this timelimit has been kept. Five minutes is for the local call. Where we have removed the STD facility and given this group dialling, three minutes is the time-limit. This scheme is being launched with the good intention of improving the communication facilities in the country. The aim is to connect every part in the country with every other part, as early as possible.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : Clarifications.

SHRI DINESHBHAI TRIVEDI (Gujarat) : May I have just half a sentence ? I think in this House the achievement of ITBP should not go unnoticed amongst so much of chaos happening. It is a big achievement by three men of ITBP. After 8 years they have climbed the Mount Everest. I am sure the entire House will join me in complimenting and congratulating not only the three men, but the entire team.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : Shri John Fernandes. (*Interruptions*). Just one minute., We are waiting for the Lok Sabha to pass the minorities Commission Bill. The Bill has already been passed there. We are waiting for the message.

Yes, Mr. Fernandes.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES (Goa) : Madam, I have to compliment the hon. Minister for making such an exhaustive and lengthy statement which aims at taking our communication system into the 21st century. (*Interruptions*). May I continue ? The hon. Minister has said that all these facilities will be available where there are electronic exchanges. Many of the State capitals do not have electronic exchanges. Take, for example, Goa State. Panjim city, which is the capital of Goa, does not have this electronic exchange, with the result that people are missing all the important facilities, especially the 'dynamic locking system' facility. I would like to know whether all State capitals will be provided with these facilities.

Secondly, this group-dialling system is very good, but we have the PCO system and this public call system has been cornered by the Department officials themselves. In the name of their relations or *benami* these PCOs are owned by them. These calls are not metered to the Department; these are free calls and the Department is losing a heavy amount through this system because the meters are always tampered with by the Department officials. I have brought it to the notice of the hon. Minister. In my State there are 10 PCOs all owned by one gentleman. This malpractice is very rampant. Will the hon. Minister investigate and take precautionary measures to see that this facility works foolproof and the Government is not put to loss ?

DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI (Andhra Pradesh) : Madam, I am happy that the Minister has come out with these proposals and I congratulate him, but at the same time, I would like to add that in most of the rural areas telephone exchanges are not functioning at all and it is very difficult to reach a village even at a stone's throw distance. He has mentioned that Delhi will be connected to Noida, Ghaziabad and Faridabad. It is all right, but take the example of Vijayawada and Guntur. There is hardly a distance of 20 miles and in between there is Mangalagiri—half way. From Vijayawada to Mangalagiri it is 10 miles and from Mangalagiri to Guntur it is 10 miles and to get a call from Mangalagiri to Guntur you have to put the call through Vijayawada and get back to Guntur. The Guntur exchange extends towards Mangalagiri by 2 kms. and Vijayawada exchange extends by 2 kms. towards Mangalagiri. Several efforts were made to see that these exchanges are connected and the calls are treated as local calls. I hope with this communication system it will be possible now.

[Dr. Yelamanchili Sivaji]

The other thing is about charges. The charges he has mentioned are exorbitant. The Minister very well says that it is cheaper as compared to other countries, but with the devaluation of rupee we cannot compare our standards with other countries. It does not mean that whenever the rupee gets devalued, our charges must go up. The Raja Chelliah Committee also says that they are going to tax telephone users hereafter and that on each telephone they are going to charge Rs. 1.000 or so. That is as per the report. In this way the Government may collect another three to four hundred crores of rupees per annum by taxing the telephone subscribers.

It is stated here, "The manual trunk call charges, however, are proposed to be revised from Rs. 2 to Rs. 5 for one call unit of 3 minutes' duration for the distance slab of 0—20 Kms ...." It is a little costly and, therefore, some other provision may be made as far as the rural exchanges are concerned. For big towns like Delhi, Hyderabad, Calcutta and others, there are several exchanges in those towns and they are all inter-connected. What is the procedure there? Will they be treated as group dialling or the same as now or, are any changes contemplated there also?

It is proposed to tax machines like Fax and other machines that are connected to the telephones like the ones for blocking the routes, etc. You can put more tax on Fax and other devices like Telex, but under this guise you are not expected to tax all the telephone subscribers.

Madam, I would like to seek these clarifications from the Minister.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry) : Madam Vice-Chairman, the hon. Minister has brought forth a very novel scheme. I would like to seek only two clarifications.

One is about meter reading. The system which the hon. Minister is bringing forth multi-metering or local calls. I have also made a suggestion earlier in this House that under the electronic exchange system meddling with the meter is not possible but, as far as the manual and auto exchanges are concerned, the employees working there rule the roost and the subscriber doesn't know how many calls he has made and he has to accept the billing that they make. Therefore, I made a suggestion, why can't the hon. Minister consider keeping a small meter at the disposal of the subscriber, one at the source, so that the person who is dialling knows how many calls he has made, so that the system could be regularized?

AN HON. MEMBER : Like an electric meter.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY : Yes, like an electric meter. The Minister is getting a lot of complaints about meddling of telephones by the employees and outsiders who know the technique. So, to avoid that, why can't the hon. Minister consider having a small meter placed at the subscriber's end? We have seen that kind of meters in European countries. Why can't we go in for them? That is number one.

Sencondly, a concessional rate of one rupee for a call of three minutes' duration is being given for the electronic exchanges. But, if it is manual or auto exchange, for three minutes, duration it goes up from Rs. 2 to Rs. 5. Why is there such a difference between the exchanges operated through the manual and auto system and the electronic exchanges?

Then, about peripheral towns, a lot of difficulties are being experienced now a days by the rural people, especially if the distance is about seven or eight kilometres. Even then one has to make a trunk call. That system is prevalent in the southern parts of the country. But earlier that system was not there. Up to 20 km. they could make a direct call. Now the areas have been divided, and new telephone exchanges have come up. By this system of trunk-call or even STD, for the same distance consumers in some areas have to pay less, and those in some other areas have to pay more. That kind of an anomaly is prevailing. That can be rectified by the hon. Minister when he is trying to strengthen the rural telephone system.

Then, Madam, the last point is that he is dividing the country into LDCAs. I also wrote a letter to the hon. Minister. They are closing the remaining exchanges which have been useful for the purpose of trunk-calls. Especially in my State, at Karaikal which is about 130 km. from the capital, Pondicherry, the truik-call facility was available to the consumers. That has been recently closed, and they are going to annex it to the Nagapattinam Exchange which is more than 20 km. from there. The existing system need not be closed. If you want to open a new system, you can have it. That is giving more revenue to you. When you are getting more revenue from an exchange, that trunk-exchange should not be closed. When you modernise, you can change the system. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether they will reopen the trunk-exchange that has been closed. I have written a letter to the hon. Minister. Will he consider this ?

MESSAGE FROM THE LOK SABHA

(i) **The National Commission for Minorities Bill, 1992.**

SECRETARY-GENERAL : I beg to report to the House the following message received from the Lok Sabha, signed by the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha:

> "In accordance with the provisions of rule 96 of tht Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, I am directed to enclose the National Commission for Minorities Bill, 1992, as passsed by Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 12th May, 1992."

I lay the Bill on the Table.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : We were waiting for this message. I have to ask of hon. Members .... (*Interruptions*)

Please wait. Please let me say something. There are 20 Members who want to seek clarifications. It is now seven o'clock. So, we can continue and finish it, but .... (*Interruptions*)

There are 20 special mentions also. So, I want to ask of hon. Members whether .... (*Interruptions*)

No. Twenty Members will be difficult.

SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA (Karnataka) : This we have started. Let us complete this.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : No, we can't. The problem then is that I cannot call all the Members from the same party. We can call only some.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA (Rajasthan) : Only one minute, Madam, I have a point here. Because you made us wait, because the message was coming from the Lok Sabha you went on adding the names which we appreciate, ...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : No.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA : Listen please. Now if you start selecting the names, it will be unfair to the Members. So, we should be allowed to ask some questions. You can limit the time to one minute. I can understand that. But you made us wait, saying that the Lok Sabha's message was coming.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : No. I am sorry. Santoshji, let me clarify something. I will go ahead and call the Members. But you were totally wrong. Nobody was asked to wait because of this, and I certainly did not add any names. I only added .... (*Interruptions*)

Please stop interrupting me.

I added the requests. There is no question that whoever gave a request is going to be called. That depends upon the Congress Party. Whatever names have been given to me, those names will be called.